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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 000618

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SUBJECT: RDF GENERAL EMPHASIZES REGIONAL STABILITY, URGES  
USG ACTION AGAINST FDLR

REF: USUN 791

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Classified By: CDA Anne Casper for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a September 23 meeting, a senior Rwandan military officer stressed that regional peace and stability, especially with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was in Rwanda's vital interest. He requested USG action against U.S.-based supporters of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an armed group operating in eastern DRC. Other senior Rwandan officials have made this same point in recent weeks. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) CDA and polcouns met on September 23 with Rwandan army Brigadier General Jerome Ngendahimana, at the latter's request, in his office at the Rwandan defense ministry. There were no other participants. Tone of the meeting was friendly.

¶3. (C) Ngendahimana, who until 2003 was the J-2 or intelligence chief for the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), said he was currently serving as Rwandan army chief Gen. James Kabarebe's military assistant for intelligence and security. (Note: The FDLR is a Rwandan politico-military group whose armed wing, perhaps 4000-6000 strong, operates in the DRC but whose political leaders live in Europe and elsewhere. End Note.) After recounting his own repatriation to Rwanda in 2003 (see para 6), Ngendahimana explained that Rwanda needed peace and stability in surrounding countries, especially the DRC, in order to secure its own economic development and attract foreign investment. Relations between Rwanda and the DRC have greatly improved, he continued, noting his own role as the senior Rwandan officer during the January-February 2009 combined Rwandan-Congolese military campaign in the DRC against the FDLR. "The Congolese population didn't trust us to leave" the DRC, he said, "but now they trust us." Again emphasizing the importance of economics, he urged USG support for Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), in order to solidify the improved ties between Rwanda and the DRC.

¶4. (C) Turning more specifically to the FDLR, Ngendahimana listed the reasons why many FDLR rank and file continue to remain in the DRC, despite increased military pressure from Rwandan, Congolese and UN forces. One reason, he said, was simply "jobs." Many FDLR members lacked formal education or were illiterate, and lacked the skills necessary to find civilian employment. "Propaganda and ideology" was another, as FDLR leaders indoctrinate the rank and file, restrict their access to outside information, and instill hatred of Tutsis and the Government of Rwanda (GOR). A third reason

was that for the past several years, "there has been no military pressure, and the FDLR have gone into business" by extracting the DRC's mineral wealth. Finally, he argued, "the international community," specifically NGOs and members of MONUC, had no interest in seeing the FDLR go away, as it would mean those NGOs and MONUC would lose their raison d'etre. Also, the "hard core" of FDLR leaders included many who had participated in the 1994 genocide and would face severe punishment were they to return to Rwanda. (Comment: Rwandan officials have long accused MONUC, the UN and international NGOs of bad faith, naivete or inefficiency. We note that Ngendahimana omitted one other oft-cited reason, namely, coercion by senior and mid-level FDLR leaders. End Comment.)

15. (C) Continuing in the same vein, Ngendahimana said top FDLR leaders and their families lived and worked unhindered in Europe and the United States, and urged the USG to take action against those on U.S. territory. When pressed for specific details, he promised to check with the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ascertain what information the GOR had previously provided the USG. (Comment: It was unclear to us whether he was referring to FDLR names the GOR has previously submitted to us for the UN sanctions process, or whether he had a different set of individuals in mind. End Comment.)

16. (C) BIO NOTE: Ngendahimana is an ethnic Hutu, married with three daughters, two sons, and three stepchildren. His wife, a Hutu from the Gisenyi area, has been a member of parliament since 2008 and has reportedly played an active role in encouraging FDLR members to return to Rwanda. Ngendahimana, describing his earlier career, said he was originally an officer in the gendarmerie, and served as a company commander

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and then battalion commander near Ruhengeri during the 1990-94 war. In 1994 he entered the DRC with remnants of the former government's armed forces and remained in the Kivus for the duration, eventually achieving the rank of colonel, as J-2 of FDLR, before he quit the DRC in 2003. Ngendahimana said that between 1994 and 2003, he had had no communication with his wife, who remained in Rwanda, but Kabarebe located her and convinced her to travel to the DRC to encourage her husband to switch sides and return to Rwanda. After hearing her testimony and questioning her at length, he did indeed return in 2003, escaping only by deceiving his fellow FDLR cadres. In 2004, fully rehabilitated and given a house by the GOR, he was promoted to brigadier general. Though he did not mention it, Ngendahimana was also a member of the GOR's own "Mucyo Commission," which investigated and reported on France's role in the 1994 genocide.

17. (C) COMMENT: Ngendahimana's emphasis on economics, and his statement that Rwanda needs peace and stability in the region in order to prosper, echo what other senior GOR officials have been saying in recent months. Consistent with our own assessment, he did not depict the FDLR's military wing in the DRC as a significant or immediate threat to Rwanda. His call for action against FDLR political cadres and other "negative forces" living outside Rwanda reflects the strong influence FDLR leaders wield over the rank and file in the bush. Other GOR officials have delivered this same message in recent weeks (reftel). Post will review the status of our information exchange with the GOR on FDLR sanctions, in response to and anticipation of this. END COMMENT.  
CASPER